

**ENDORSEMENT QUOTES FOR SENATOR GILLIBRAND'S**  
**FAIR PROCEEDINGS ACT**

**American Immigration Council**

Jorge Loweree, Director of Policy

The vast majority of people navigating our immigration system are forced to do so without the support of counsel and without access to the government records necessary to defend against their deportation. The current system is fundamentally unfair as it undermines due process and reduces the likelihood that people will ultimately succeed in their proceedings. The FAIR proceedings Act is a critical step forward in creating a more fair and equitable immigration system where noncitizens and vulnerable populations have a fair shot in defending against detention and deportation.

**Center for American Progress**

Sharita Gruberg, Vice President, LGBTQ Research and Communications Project, Center for American Progress

“Research demonstrates access to counsel plays a significant role in immigration case outcomes. The FAIR Proceedings Act is critical to upholding due process and ensuring cases are judged on the merits and not just whether or not someone could afford a lawyer. For LGBTQ people fleeing persecution, having a lawyer can mean the difference between life and death.”

**Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law**

Peter A. Schey, President

"Since 1997 we have served as court-appointed class counsel in the Flores case for all detained minors and in that capacity we have repeatedly observed the need for representation of minors in removal cases where the absence of counsel routinely leads to multiple continuances and delays, and often to deportation orders against children who qualify for lawful status under existing statutes enacted by Congress. The 1997 Flores settlement sets the national standards for the conditions of detention and release of children, but has no protections for children in removal proceedings and these protections may be achieved and court proceedings made far more efficient by enactment of the Fair Proceedings Act."

**First Focus Campaign for Children**

Bruce Lesley, President

“For decades, too many children and families seeking protection in the United States have faced our complex immigration system without a guarantee of legal counsel. In 2017, over 75 percent of children were unrepresented in their immigration proceedings. In 2016, 70 percent of families did not have an attorney when their cases closed. Those in detention face even more barriers to accessing counsel. For a child or parent, a denial of immigration relief could mean life or death. We applaud you for introducing a bill to ensure that children and families know their rights and have support as they pursue safety and protection in the United States. By providing counsel for consolidated cases where there is no conflict of interest, this legislation recognizes that children are a part of their family and what happens in their parent’s case affects their safety and well-being. Research shows that when individuals are appointed counsel, the efficiency of proceedings significantly improve and people are more likely to be granted a form of humanitarian relief. Children and families who have endured significant trauma both in their home countries and during their journeys should not be without counsel during proceedings that could have life or death consequences. Thank you again for your leadership on behalf of children and families. We look forward to working with you on this important legislation, which takes a critical step in meeting children’s needs and protecting best interests.”

### **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)**

Melanie Nezer, HIAS’ senior vice president of public affairs.

“Access to counsel is critical during immigration proceedings,” said Melanie Nezer, HIAS’ senior vice president of public affairs. “As a provider of legal services and support to asylum seekers, HIAS has seen the difference that legal representation can make for someone asking for protection in the United States. Unfortunately, the number of asylum seekers without counsel has substantially risen in the last ten years. The FAIR Proceedings Act would help remedy this by providing government-funded legal counsel to vulnerable asylum seekers and giving them a fair chance at protection in the United States.”

### **International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)**

Amy Taylor, our Deputy Executive Director

"Immigration court proceedings have extremely high stakes and can result in permanent separation of families and exposure to high-risk situations in respondents' home countries. The FAIR Proceedings Act would ensure that more immigrants - most of whom are now currently unrepresented - get the representation they need when navigating one of the most complex areas of the law against a U.S. government attorney in immigration court."

### **Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)**

Wendy Young, President

“The FAIR Proceedings Act ensures the fundamental fairness that all children need and deserve in their immigration proceedings – the right to a lawyer to stand by their side as they face an immigration judge,” said KIND President Wendy Young. “The enormity of the stakes to the child cannot be understated, and as research has shown, whether a child receives the protection for which she is eligible often hinges on whether or not they are fortunate enough to have an attorney. The FAIR Proceedings Act will eliminate this roll of the dice justice and allow all children to have a fair chance to make their case for U.S. protection in immigration court.”

### **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services**

Krish Vignarajah, President and CEO

“LIRS is proud to endorse Funding Attorneys for Indigent Removal (FAIR) Proceedings Act and is thankful to Senator Gillibrand for reintroducing this bill. It is critical that the basic right of access to counsel is extended to vulnerable populations, such as children, individuals with disabilities and victims of abuse, torture and violence, and those living on the verge of poverty, that are in the immigration court system. The bill would help ensure that our court system is reflective of their unique needs and best interests.”

### **National Immigrant Justice Center**

Mary Meg McCarthy, Executive Director

“Deportation can be permanent exile from your loved ones, or it can mean return to the country where you were brutally tortured. Imagine defending against this penalty alone, in front of a judge, opposite a federally funded prosecutor. Appointed counsel is the minimum process due immigrants navigating the complex U.S. immigration system. The National Immigrant Justice Center is proud to endorse the FAIR Proceedings Act.” **For additional information, please see NIJC’s blog post on access to counsel [here](#).**

### **National Partnership for New Americans**

Nicole Melaku, executive director of NPNA

"Fundamental values of justice, due process, and equal protection require that people in immigration proceedings have the right to a publically-funded attorney. For far too long, immigrants in removal proceedings have faced a draconian, unbalanced deportation system without the basic opportunity to assert their rights and humanitarian-based claims and other forms of relief. The Funding Attorneys for Indigent Removal (FAIR) Proceedings Act begins to address this injustice for children; people with disabilities, victims of abuse, torture, and violence; working class and low-income immigrants; and others. This is why the National Partnership for New Americans is proud to endorse the Act."

### **The New York City Bar Association**

Danny Alicea, Chair, New York City Bar Association Immigration & Nationality Law Committee.

“The New York City Bar Association reiterates its longstanding position in favor of expanding legal representation in immigration court proceedings and urges Congress to pass the FAIR Proceedings Act as an essential measure to promote fairness and justice in the immigration courts. Access to counsel is especially important in immigration cases, due to the high stakes, complexity of the law, and special vulnerabilities of respondents. Immigration court has been likened to adjudicating death penalty sentence cases in traffic court. Children and survivors of torture should not be compelled to appear without counsel in proceedings where an incorrect decision could result in their prolonged detention, denial or loss of immigration status, separation from their families, and even deportation to possible persecution and death.”

### **New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)**

Beth Goldman, President and Attorney-In-Charge

“The FAIR Proceedings Act is a powerful step towards securing much needed legal representation for the most vulnerable immigrants, many of whom face torture, arrest, and death if forced to return to their home countries. Although the immigration system is incredibly complex and the stakes are high, more than half of non-citizens, including children, survivors of trafficking, and other vulnerable populations, do not have representation. The FAIR Proceedings Act will ensure that many of those non-citizens who are most in need of protection will have the representation and due process that they deserve.”

### **Ohio Immigrant Alliance**

Lynn Tramonte, Director

"Having to appear in immigration court isn't like any other civil matter. For many people, the outcome means life or death; the ability to stay with your family or be permanently banished. A real shot at a future versus instability and uncertainty. Access to legal counsel is a bedrock principle of the U.S. judicial system. The FAIR Proceedings Act would make this basic right a reality for more people navigating the complex, contradictory, and often inhumane U.S. immigration laws. Ohio Immigrant Alliance is grateful to Senator Gillibrand for introducing this bill, and we call on Congress and the Biden administration to open up pathways to legal counsel for immigrants through legislation, appropriations, and administrative action," said Lynn Tramonte, Director, Ohio Immigrant Alliance.

### **Oxfam**

Noah Gottschalk, Global Policy Lead

“Senator Gillibrand’s bill will help ensure that vulnerable refugees including children, survivors of torture and abuse, and people living in poverty do not have to navigate the complex U.S. legal system alone. For far too many people, the basic human right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution is rendered meaningless without access to counsel. Oxfam welcomes this legislation as a vital step toward respecting the rights and dignity of immigrants and refugees and upholding our nation’s legal obligations.”

### **Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)**

Manoj Govindaiah, Director of Policy and Government Affairs

"The FAIR Proceedings Act is a great initial step in the long quest for fundamental fairness in immigration proceedings. We are proud to work with Sen. Gillibrand in pursuing this legislation which will help ensure that due process rights of immigrants facing deportation are acknowledged and protected."

### **Vera Institute of Justice**

Anne Marie Mulcahy, director, Center on Immigration and Justice

“The Vera Institute of Justice welcomes Senator Gillibrand’s FAIR Proceedings Act for advancing crucial protections to address our unfair and dehumanizing immigration system, which has been centered on mass detention and deportation for decades, and immigration policing efforts that sow fear in Black and brown immigrant communities in particular,” said Anne Marie Mulcahy, director, Center on Immigration and Justice. “To create a fair immigration system with equal justice, every immigrant facing deportation should have their case meaningfully heard in court. This requires ensuring every person facing deportation who cannot afford an attorney is represented by a government-funded lawyer regardless of race, national origin, or history with the criminal legal system. Without counsel, immigrants have little chance of successfully fighting deportation.”